

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for collecting information associated with a vending machine, the method comprising:

detecting a vending event associated with the vending machine;

storing a dataset associated with the vending event, the dataset being stored in a standard format;

retrieving the dataset;

parsing at least one data field from the dataset; and

transmitting the at least one data field.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the standard format is the DEX format.

3. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one data field is transmitted to a handheld circuitry.

4. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one data field is transmitted by a wireless means.

5. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one data field is transmitted at least in part over an interconnected network.

6. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one data field is transmitted to a central monitoring facility.

7. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one data field is transmitted by a communications means, the communications means selected from a group consisting of a telephone line, an Ethernet, a wireless Ethernet, a two-way paging system, a mobile phone system, a cellular phone system, a packet-radio system, a fiber optic network and the Bluetooth (TM) wireless communication standard.

8. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one data field is transmitted in a data packet, the data packet comprising the data field and a unique identification number associated with the vending machine.

9. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one data field is transmitted in response to a polling signal.